

# An Inspiring Novel and Motion Picture Drama

Written by Hereward Carrington.

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Dramatized by Charles W. Goddard.

## (Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.)

Myra Maynard, a beautiful heiress, is the victim of an occult conspiracy, a society of black magicians, under the leadership of a master of psychic art, endeavoring to cause her death in order to obtain possession of her father's estate. Dr. Payson Alden, a physician who has devoted his life to the study of the occult, saves her from suicide while under the hypnotic influence of the hand. With the aid of Prince Hadji, Dr. Alden gains admission to the underground meeting place of the Black Order. He is convinced to death for his interference, but is saved from live burial by his confederate. He reaches the laboratory in time to save Myra from death by poison. Arthur Varney, a wealthy clubman, who is a suitor for Myra's hand, has been in league with the conspirators, and the watchful Dr. Alden has thus far thwarted his efforts.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### The Lost Trail.

DR. ALDEN was more determined than ever to end the activities of the Black Order.

"I must get the authorities on this case now, for the Black Order will do no more of this sort of thing."

"You can go to the order meeting if you will, but be wary. For I intend to have the police raid it as soon as they can be stirred into definite action."

The Hindoo left Alden's residence, his heart troubled by mingled emotions. Yet he was faithful to his mission. There was no fear in heart.

The miraculous escape of the physician from the clutches of the devil worshippers was the subject of more than one whispered conference. Yet the command of the evil pontiff, the master of ceremonies forbade any general discussion among the brethren. The master had already planned a method in which to trap the unknown traitor within their ranks, craftily as his work had been concealed.

Haji reported to the leader of ceremonies, and with several other members was sent out upon certain missions to remote parts of the city. Accordingly, it was not until some time later that he knew of the secret developments.

Payson Alden, after studying a plan of action from every angle, at last walked to the police station for an interview with the captain. At first his story was scouted.

"Sure, your honor, you're crazy! There isn't nothing like that going on in this district. Why, we're up here on the edge of the city. And that old house you tell about hasn't been occupied for twenty years."

"You're mistaken, officer," insisted Alden. "Just look at these bruises on my arm. I'm still stiff from the time I had with them. If you will send some men with me, I'll prove to you how possible it is."

The officer grudgingly summoned two plain clothes men, who accompanied Alden toward the deserted farm. A stretch of woodland had to be passed before they came to the stone buildings.

Alden and his companions failed to observe two skulking figures peering at them from the shelter of some evergreens. One of the men waved his arm with a peculiar gesture, looking back toward a small culvert.

The signal was repeated by another watcher, so that his action was observed by a man peering from behind a stone wall through binoculars. This man disappeared abruptly.

As they prowled about through the thicket Alden finally located the holed trunked tree through which he had gained entry to the subterranean chambers of the order.

"There, officer," declared the doctor. "You see the marks where I was dragged out of the trunk. The trunk was closed. This leads directly to the meeting rooms."

The detective studied the place carefully. One of them cautiously entered, and sent the ray of a pocket light into the cavity.

"Yes, there are steps. This is a sure lead," said he. "Jim, you go back and tell the chief that we've got the place. Bring a bunch of the fellows. And don't go to sleep, either, for these birds will begin to fly south."

The other man hurried away. The detective studied the place with questions. Alden limited his descriptions of the inner workings of the order to the assertion that the men in black tried to kill him for some unknown reason. He volunteered nothing about the connection of Myra Maynard with the plot.

It was fully half an hour before the other detective returned with the captain and an automobile. The captain, filled with informed reserves, the captain himself ordered them to surround the old building.

"When I hear the whistle, close in from all sides and I'll wait this way here myself," he cried.

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have peace. I hardly believe that he is worth the terrible risk he is running."

Her maid came upstairs to announce the arrival of a visitor. It was Arthur Varney.

His dark eyes glowed with pleasure and renewed confidence as he greeted her. But their conversation was interrupted by Willis, the butler, who had gone to answer a ring at the front door.

"Miss Myra, here's a letter which I found under the door. When I opened it there was not a soul in sight," he said anxiously but politely trying to scrutinize the unusual handwriting on the black envelope.

A curious smile seemed to twist Varney's lips for an instant, and Willis shot him a questioning glance. But the expression died away, and the well-bred man's face assumed its usual calmness.

Myra's fingers trembled as she tore open the envelope, to draw out the black message which she had just received.

The lustrous blue eyes dilated in sheer horror when she saw in the lower corner, in place of a signature, the outline of two faces with thumbs upturned, drawn in white ink! It was the sign of the devil worshippers!

"What is this?" she cried, averting her glance before she dared to finish the message which was written above the dread symbol.

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don't you let me try to hypnotize you, and perhaps your astral can go hunt him up and save him?" he volunteered.

The girl shook her head slowly. "No, you couldn't do it. It is a very scientific matter, you know, Arthur."

"Well, why not let me try? I've seen it done several times in exhibitions. But their conversation was interrupted by Willis, the butler, who had gone to answer a ring at the front door.

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imagined that Varney was quite familiar with the mechanism.

CHAPTER XXIV. The Master's Revenge.

LOEN, finally despairing of any new clues, looked at his watch and decided to report the strange occurrence to Myra.

He strode nervously across the uneven ground to the roadway. As he quickened his pace upon the more level thoroughfare, a small boy riding a bicycle tinkled his bell and stopped abruptly.

The youngster looked at him quizzically and then called out sharply. "Hey, there, are you Mister Alden?"

The physician whirled about in surprise. "Who do you want?"

"What's yer first name?" was the shrewd inquiry, by way of reply.

"That's my business," responded the lad. "What's your first name? I know what I got paid for."

The doctor smiled. The boy, despite his juvenile cockiness, was the possessor of an honest grin, and Alden instinctively trusted him.

"Well, my name is Payson Alden. If you have anything to tell me, don't hesitate. Here is my card, and I'll get my hat and coat right away."

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gaining to flare up. We may expect the worst of everything from now on."

And as the policemen rushed a patrol wagon to bear the body of the dead man to the coroner's office, Alden hurried with increasing apprehension to Myra's home.

CHAPTER XXV. The New Astral Intrigue.

HERE is Miss Myra, Charles?" asked Mrs. Maynard of the chauffeur, as he brought the car to a stop before the house.

"Why, I just took her with Mr. Varney, ma'am, over to Dr. Alden's house," was the reply.

"What is she doing there?" she demanded. "I don't understand this at all."

"I don't know, ma'am," faltered Charles, scratching his head, as he tried to remember some of the things he had overheard. "Oh, yes, she said something about a laboratory, I think."

"Mrs. Maynard gave an ejaculation of alarm."

"That terrible place again! And she promised me that she would not go there again under any circumstances."

Alden's eyes opened wide. This was the most surprising of the day. Myra and Arthur Varney going to his laboratory, when he was confident that the girl knew he was not there!

"What! Am I crazy or is she?" he exclaimed.

"I'm sorry, sir, I don't know, sir," apologized Willis, with an embarrassed cough.

"Well, there's only one thing to do! And with the words, Alden ran down the steps, his mind racing for the departing taxicab, and he ordered the driver to make speed.

The machine whizzed up to the house, and Alden sprang out, tossing the mail in a yellow-backed bill, without waiting for change. Into the house he sped, using his latch key, and straight up the stairs.

As he reached the upper floor, he paused outside his laboratory door, as he heard the oiled creaks of Arthur Varney.

"I tell you it won't do any good to start the machine again, Mrs. Maynard. You must just wait and see what happens!"

"Then I'll start it myself!" cried the good doctor, as he opened the door. Alden could only be reached.

"Well, he can't be reached. And I doubt if the fool could understand the case, anyway," was the impatient retort.

Alden stepped into the room, his eyes blazing.

"I understand more than you think I do, Varney," he snapped, as he ran to the girl's side. The astonished interloper stepped back as though he were expecting a blow.

But Alden had his mind on only one thing. He knelt by the girl's side and began to manipulate her wrist.

Then, this falling to bring results, he commanded, begged, and almost shouted an order for her to "Wake up!" It amounted to naught.

Little Miss Maynard and the doctor dream as they worked over the unconscious girl that this evening was her astral and that of the dread Black Master could be seen floating hand in hand in the clouds of insensate space above the altar of the Devil worshippers.

Even Varney, ignorant of the full extent of his ally's power, was not a stranger to the transposition of souls was taking place and that when Myra awoke it would be with the spirit of another animating her body.

"If the machine made her go away, it ought to make her come back," persisted Mrs. Maynard. "Oh, doctor, try anything, please, for poor little Myra's sake."

The physician walked to the levers. His keen eye noted the butts of some cigarettes on the floor beside it. Even in that preoccupied moment he realized that Varney must have been slow in the hypnotic work to have had time for smoking three!

"Why not run the machine backward, Myra? That will reverse the action," ventured Mrs. Maynard.

Alden was about to turn the advice aside, when something prompted him to follow it.

The lights were soon glittering once more in the whirling reflectors. The tired watching the unconscious face with varying emotions. Suddenly the eyelids stirred, and were lifted, ever so weakly.

"Hurrah!" cried Alden. "Mrs. Maynard, you've made a great psychic discovery!"

"I don't care about that," cried the mother, kissing the girl. "All I want is my daughter back!"

"She's back!" exclaimed Varney, and there was disappointment on his astonished features.

Myra stirred and now looked at her mother, with a strange expression.

"Yes, it's mother! Isn't it?" Alden was puzzled at the speech, and even at the curious stiffness of her tones.

Myra came out of this dreadful trance with a look of horror on her face. She put on her coat and slipped on her hat and walking stick. He cast a look at Alden, who was studying him with fingers which itched for a vigorous but comfortable heavy neck.

"Yes, I think she had better go home and rest. And you two had better go home alone together, Mrs. Maynard," said the doctor.

"No, I don't think of this going without an escort," objected Varney.

"Very well, I will be in the house, then," observed the physician. There was a knock at the door, and a servant lowered the group downstairs and into the automobile.

Alden was watching Myra with a

